

Mayor Mike Winder
State of the City Address 2012
West Valley City, Utah

West Valley City Positioned for Prosperity

From the Daily Mail in London to the San Francisco Chronicle, readers around the world last month were moved as they learned of an accident involving a bus at 3650 South 3200 West in West Valley City, Utah. The bus had turned the corner and struck 24-year-old Aryann Smith as she was in the crosswalk, pinning her to the ground and severely crushing both of her legs. The heroism of the first responders is now well known, especially the tender compassion of Officer Kevin Peck. Officer Peck crawled under the bus and lay on the cold pavement beside her, holding her hand, and comforting Aryann in those vital minutes of shock and pain.

“She was very scared,” Officer Peck related. “She asked me not to leave. So I said I would just stay under there with her until we got her out” he said. “I told her that I would stay there.” And he did. Holding her hand, reassuring her, and keeping her calm until the rescue.

I have personally received numerous emails from people across the country who were inspired by those acts, who were impressed by the West Valley City Police Department, and whose faith in the brotherhood of man was renewed.

Kevin Peck's simple act of charity and humanity highlights the best that is in all of us, and speaks volumes about both his individual character and the collective devotion that the employees of West Valley City have to selflessly serve the public—service that I will spotlight today.

Fellow citizens, it is a deep honor to stand here as this city's mayor; and with my colleagues on the City Council beside me to celebrate the great good happening in our city, to outline the challenges that lie before us and how we will meet them; to deliver the 2012 State of the City address.

This month marks the one-year anniversary of our city's English Language Initiative. We want to use this opportunity to ask you to join us in continuing to encourage people in our community to learn English. Over 100 immigrants have completed an English language class and been recognized at our city council meetings in April and November, and we will continue to applaud these efforts. Many newcomers have New Year's resolutions to improve their English, and we

can help our neighbors and co-workers by practicing with them and encouraging them in a non-judgmental way. This is America, this is Utah, this is West Valley City—and here the tongue that binds us together as a strong community is English.

As the fabric of our neighborhoods change we have been extra vigilant to ensure that code violations are enforced. In 2008, 43% of properties in the city were out of compliance with one or more codes—be it inoperable vehicles, improper parking surfaces, landscaping issues, or outside storage and waste. Other communities in the Salt Lake Valley averaged 20% of homes with issues. After a lot of hard work, a study done in September of this year showed that the rate of noncompliance has dropped to 12 percent. This is a huge testament to our city staff and the pride our residents are taking in their homes and yards!

When faced with a possible hike in garbage collection fees, the city leveraged the power of the free market to have sanitation companies compete for our business. The resulting partnership with Waste Management meant that not only were we able to hold the line on garbage fees without an increase, but that we also became the first city in the state with a full fleet of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) garbage trucks, reducing carbon monoxide emissions by 80 percent. With privatization, the taxpayers win!

The city enjoyed major transportation improvements over the past year, thanks in large part to our partners at UDOT and UTA. Light-rail returned to the city when the Green Line for TRAX opened in August ahead of schedule and under budget. New intersections along Bangerter Highway has reduced east-west traffic congestion, and a new slip-ramp frontage road off of I-215 provides easy access to Valley Fair Mall from the east.

A “West Valley City Renaissance” is taking place in the urban heart of our city. The mall continues to improve and add new stores, and the Olive Garden was named #1 in North America. Sales at the mall were up 35% last year versus the previous year. West of the mall we unveiled the half-billion dollar Fairbourne Station project—which will emerge as a city center worthy of Utah’s second largest city and the premier transit oriented development in the West. And west of those blocks we see the new Granger High School emerging from the old park. This will be Utah’s newest and largest high school when completed in 2013, capable of serving 2,600 students.

I’ve mentioned evidence of compassion in our police department, but they are also to be commended for helping over 200 underprivileged children in 71 families

through the Giving Tree during the holidays. Notably, they have remained vigilant in the investigation of the disappearance of Susan Powell. And remarkably they have also served during the fifth straight year that major crimes in all areas have not increased even though the population has. Our officers are a big part of this, but so are our neighborhood watch groups. Last year we received our seventh consecutive “National Night Out Against Crime” award from the National Association of Town Watches.

Our Public Works team continues to make resources stretch so that our facilities and roads continue to be enjoyed by many. Our parks and recreation team planted new trees and enhanced programs at our popular Family Fitness Center. Adoptions are way up at our new Animal Shelter, and the first Pet Fest was held. The heroism of our fire department continues to be recognized. Our Finance Department received their seventeenth consecutive Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Award.

At the city’s Utah Cultural Celebration Center, ground was broken for the Chinese Heritage Friendship Gate and we unveiled the Stella 5 or “Tree of Life” stone replica, a gift from the state of Chiapas in Mexico. Ten major exhibits were hosted there last year, as well as four celebrations; twelve concerts; nine receptions; one

festival; and four theater, film, literature academic events--with a total attendance of over 32,000 people. Let us applaud all of the city employees that made 2011 such a banner year for our city! [APPLAUSE]

But despite these successes we know that the economy is still fragile, and therefore encouraging job creation continues as one of our highest priorities. We realize that government doesn't create jobs, the private sector does. But nobody understands as well as West Valley City that for companies to thrive and jobs to locate here we must create an atmosphere that is pro-growth and business-friendly.

Tonight, I am pleased to announce five new initiatives that will help cement West Valley City as the most business-friendly in the state:

1. Our goal is to be the government with the fastest development plan review process in the state, period. This doesn't mean that all plans get approved, of course, or that we will be more permissive because of our speed; but it does mean that review answers will be forthcoming quickly, and that a developer looking to build or a business looking to come here will enjoy a streamlined process with city employees eager to help move progress forward.
2. We will begin to hold a weekly open development meeting where applicants can get feedback on their concept plans from involved departments before

they even submit any formal plans. This will be a free service. Businesses and developers are encouraged to bring forth their ideas, and our staff will be there to help point them in the right direction.

3. Our city manager will call on each city department to actively provide leads to our Economic Development staff of business contacts they learn of that are searching for a new location. Everyone talks with friends, family, and acquaintances and we will encourage them to forward any potential opportunities.
4. To help promote small businesses in our city, we will provide reports and other technical assistance we're able to from subscription services that we pay for as a city. Demographic information, business trends, and consumer spending are examples of what we could provide to help our businesses make smarter decisions.
5. This year we will implement cutting-edge software called Active Review that will allow us to review development plans digitally, eliminating the need to print plans and physically deliver them. This digital process will speed up our processes to the benefit of new business.

These five initiatives will help our city continue to be a leader in economic development. It is significant to note that in this past year our staff has worked

with the private sector to attract 1,215 new jobs to the city, \$590,000 in new sales tax dollars, and over \$63,000,000 in new capital investment. These figures are all from projects our city staff has worked with, and does NOT reflect market –driven increases that may have happened in our community without city support.

These new jobs, sales tax dollars and capital investment come from companies like Hexcel, Carter Distribution, Target, Oquirrh Meadows, Kodiak Produce, Intermountain Bobcat, Backcountry.com, Dollar Financial, Hilton Embassy Suites Hotel (which will be the first four-star hotel in our city), and Hilton Home 2 Suites (the first hotel in our Lake Park Corporate Center, Utah’s largest business park).

This year we anticipate more groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings as the next phase of the Valley Fair Mall expansion takes place; with a 15-screen, 3200 seat Larry H. Miller MegaPlex leading the way. Add that to the interior mall renovation and new national tenants, and we expect \$50 million to \$70 million dollars in additional annual sales at the mall to be added this year alone.

On the other end of the city we have what we call the Northwest Economic Development Area, which will be a distribution center of 1.7 million square feet, bringing \$150 million dollars in capital investment and 3,000 new jobs.

On the western edge of our city we also have the continued growth of composite manufacturer Hexcel, which will be investing an additional \$130 million in capital investment on new lines, bringing with it an additional 120 new high tech jobs.

As the new Target store opens this year on 5600 West, surrounding retail is already looking to blossom. This will bring \$10 million dollars in capital investment, 100,000 square feet of retail and \$25 million dollars in annual sales. I'm excited!

In our Fairbourne Station development by the City Hall TRAX station we will break ground on the first ICO residential tower, a \$25 million dollar capital investment bringing 226 of our city's first Class A apartments.

Our growing ethnic business sector is also poised for growth as Saigon Plaza II gets started on 3500 South—a \$3 million dollar project that will bring \$2 million dollars in annual sales and greatly beautify that section of our city's "Main Street."

We could sit back and wait for the economic recovery to fall out of the sky and come to us, but that is not the West Valley City way. We will continue to be

scrappy, creative, and aggressive in pursuing new opportunities to employ our residents, enhance our tax base, and rejuvenate our urban landscape.

Because at the end of the day, we have a charge to keep as your elected officials.

We feel passionately that we should leave this city better and stronger than we found it when we took office. And working in partnership with our city CEO, City Manager Wayne Pyle, and his talented staff, we will continue to make good on that commitment.

Thank you and may God continue to bless West Valley City, Utah!